

INDIE GAME MAG

Issue 1, Winter 2008



WORLD OF GOO

Reviewed Inside:

- World of Goo
- Kudos 2
- Professor Fizzwizzle
- Castle Crashers
- Braid

Indie Game Magazine is licensed under Creative Commons Attribution-No Derivative Works 3.0 United States License. All game logos, screenshots, artwork, trademarks, etc are property of their respective owner.

WORLD OF GOO

The background features a stylized, whimsical landscape. In the foreground, there are rolling hills with green grass and small, dark, tree-like shapes. A large, brown, mechanical structure, possibly a windmill or a piece of machinery, is prominent in the center. The sky is a warm, yellowish-orange color, suggesting a sunset or sunrise. The overall style is clean and modern, with a focus on organic shapes and a warm color palette.

Letter from the Editor

On behalf of the Indie Game Magazine, I take this opportunity to express our sincerest appreciation for your purchase and support of our little magazine. IGM is deeply grateful for your support and generosity.

It is through the support of individuals like you that we will be able to continue to strengthen our magazine, and support all the indie game developers and studios out there.

IGM depends on every reader and indie game supporter out there to help spread the word and keep our doors open. Thank you for supporting the indie game community.

Sincerely,

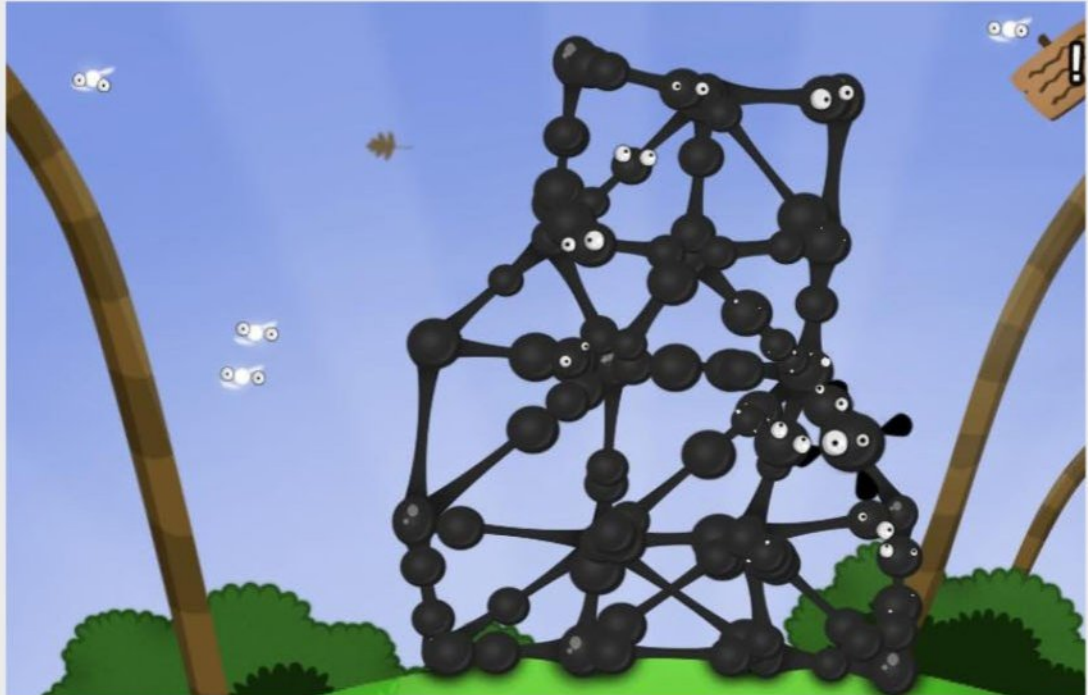
Mike Gnade

Mike Gnade
Editor-in-chief, IGM

Indie Game Magazine - Winter 2008

Cover.....	1
Letter from the Editor	2
Table of Contents	3
Cover Story	4-5
Reviews.....	6-11

Indie Game Magazine is licensed under Creative Commons Attribution-No Derivative Works 3.0 United States License. All game logos, screenshots, artwork, trademarks, etc are property of their respective owner.



Windows, WiiWare

WORLD OF GOO

Developer: 2dBoy - Players: 1 - Website: www.2dboy.com

World of Goo
Review by Mike

Gameplay: 9
Graphics: 10
Sound: 10
Appeal: 8

Final: 97%

World of Goo is the first game from Indie Game Studio, 2D Boy. Founded by Kyle Gabler and Ron Carmel, 2D Boy's goal (according to their website) is to "make games that everyone can play, with gameplay nobody has seen before." Well, they have certainly met this goal with World of Goo. World of Goo is hard to pigeon hole into one game genre, but I guess if I had to label it I would describe it as a goo-construction physics puzzle action game. Basically, you drag and drop goo balls to build towers, bridges etc. towards a vacuum pipe that sucks up all the

remaining goos. The game is definitely out there and utterly unique, but it's also incredibly sublime.

Gameplay: 10/10

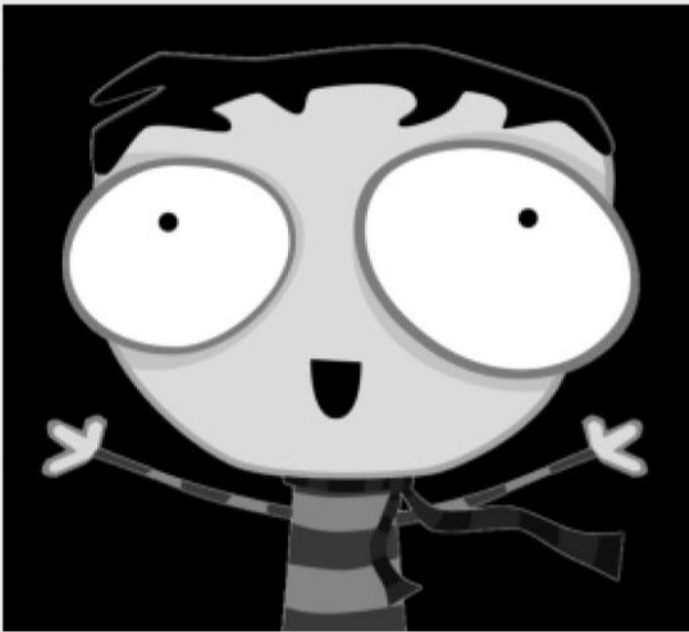
Pros: The gameplay is unlike any other game out there. It's sort of like building with K'nex... except their goo balls with little personalities. Each level poses a brand new challenge and the game controls are pretty basic (drag & click). The game introduces new goos at a great pace which helps keep the puzzles and goo building fresh. There's sort of a story and it's interestingly told.

Cons: The game is over too fast,

but great games always are. Large goo structures can be tricky to build and frustrating tip over...but the limited level skips are always enough to keep you moving along the campaign.

Graphics: 10/10

Pros: The art style is probably the best thing about the game. It is very odd...especially the cutscenes and some of the level pieces (Girl Goo Heads, Wacky Hands, Creepy Robot Heads, etc) but utterly charming. The game's first chapter is very clean and colorful...but as the game progresses the art style starts permeating through and gets weirder and weirder along with



Verdict:
97%
EDITOR'S CHOICE

the wacky story. All this oddity is a good thing though. The visuals never get boring and the presentation and execution is excellent.

Sound/Music: 10/10

Pros: The music perfectly fits the art style and mood, but what really makes the game's auditory experience so excellent are the sound effects. Goo giggles, mumbles gibberish, inflates, etc. and the People of World of Goo speak emphatic gibberish as well...but all along the way convey emotion. That coupled with the sheer humor of the it all makes it incredibly enjoyable.

Lasting Appeal: 8/10

Pros: There are 5 Chapters and an Epi-

logue, with each world having a decent number of levels (~10) but when a game is this enjoyable and completely lacks tedium you always want more. The Global Ranking score system add replayability and the meta game of using extra goo to build the tallest tower also adds longevity to the title. Cons: Ultimately the game can be beaten over a weekend and every level played.

Average: 95.00%

Tilt: +2.00%

What it comes down to is that World of Goo is one of the finest and most original games I have played in recent years. It may not be the longest expe-

rience, but much like XBLA's Braid, Goo maintains an interest and high quality throughout every level of the game. The game is a fantastic experience that will be thoroughly enjoyed, but then you can move on. This approach to indie games is excellent because ultimately and indie studio cannot compete with the longevity of a commercial studio game. This is what they do best - Wow you with originality, art style and uniqueness and offer you a fantastic experience for the fraction of the price of a full scale commercial title. World of Goo is an exceptional game at an exceptional price. There's really no excuse not to experience the creativity, art, and fun that permeates this game.



Windows, Mac

KUDOS 2

Developer: Positech Games - **Players:** 1 - **Website:** positech.co.uk

Kudos 2 is the sequel to Positech Games life simulator game, Kudos. The game puts you in control of making your character's everyday decisions from their 20th birthday to their 30th. If you are familiar with Kudos, then you definitely know what to expect in the sequel. Not much has changed since the first one except a significantly enhanced style and presentation.

Gameplay: 8/10

Pros: The same strategy gameplay from Kudos returns to Kudos 2. The game is very simple to play (but definitely hard to master) and surprisingly addictive. The new ability to customize your avatar really adds a lot to the experience.
Cons: Gameplay consists of clicking and navigating menus. The tutorial/instruction of the game is a little scant. Your friends are way too needy! and your never seem to have enough cash (ok maybe this simulator is hitting close to home).

Graphics: 10/10

Pros: I actually didn't notice how much better the graphics were till I looked at screens between the two games. Kudos 1 had freaky blank-faced character models and a washed out and colorless presentation (I guess it took place in Seattle or London) whereas Kudos 2 has

slick customizable characters, and vibrant menus and a colorful presentation.

Cons: An utter lack of animation permeates the sequel, but then again, animation isn't really needed for this type of game.

Sound/Music: 9/10

Pros: Congratulations to Jesse Hopkins who does a great job with the music for this game. The music is very calming, laid back and subtle. The music does a fantastic job capturing the mood of the day and the atmosphere of the game. Sound is kept to simple clicks and what I would call "alert sounds" (ie. dog barking, rain falling, character coughing) that help notify the player of their situation.

Cons: Nothing really to complain about...

Lasting Appeal: 9/10

Pros: The bright and upbeat music and improved graphics of this sequel make a huge difference in the amount of time that you can spend playing the game. It takes a decent amount of time to live your life from 20-30 in the game, but the character customization and sheer amount of choices, skills and statistics add a lot of replay value.

Cons: I'm really not sure if this is a game or a simulator/strategy game. In many

ways it's more similar to a board game with stat tracking character sheets than a video game. That's not necessarily a bad thing, but also makes this game not suitable to everyone.

Average: 90.00%

Tilt: +/- 0.00%

Kudos 2 is a life simulator and that's exactly what you get (and a vastly improved one at that) but if that explanation of the game alone makes you cringe than this game is absolutely not for you. It's a very relaxing and enjoyable diversion where you can live a virtual life. The sheer amount of choice in this game is ridiculous. I do have a suggestion for Kudos 3. I think it would be fantastic if the game placed you in your senior year of high school rather than your 20s as a poor waiter. As an 18 year old, you would have high school friends, finish out your senior year of high school, apply and select a college (or start in the workforce), and continue to try and maintain long time friends as you move away from school into your 20s & 30s. This would break up the game and vary the virtual life experience a little more. All in all, I look forward to Kudos 3 and thoroughly enjoyed Kudos 2. The gameplay is only subtly changed, but the overall package is vastly improved.

Kudos 2
Review by Mike

Gameplay: 8
Graphics: 10
Sound: 9
Appeal: 9

Final: 90%



Windows

MR. ROBOT

Developer: Moonpod - **Players:** 1 - **Website:** www.moonpod.com

Mr. Robot immediately impresses with its visual style and presentation. The dialogue is witty and funny, and the different robots even exude personality. It's a more traditional style RPG and the battles are nothing to rave about, but the room puzzles are fun and all in all Mr. Robot is a solid package.

Gameplay: 8/10

Pros: The game is very well-tuned and tweaked and all the menus etc. are easy to navigate. The buttons are simple: Action and Jump and the game is instantly playable. The game offers a pretty engaging and enjoying little story and the RPG battles are more traditional, but succinct and fun.

Cons: The isometric view makes moving around Mr. Robot a little awkward. I found the Mouse control to be very poor and clunky and switched to the keyboard to move around and jump, etc. In my opinion, the other weakpoint of the gameplay is the generic, traditional RPG battles, though I have to admit they are well spread out.

Graphics: 9/10

Pros: Definitely one of the strongest aspects of this title, the graphics are great and have a nice 3D feel to them. I am especially fond of all the robot animations which are incredibly fluid. The robots really

come to life.

Cons: The battles take place in cyber space which apparently doesn't look as good as real space. The textures, spaceship look gets repetitive.

Sound/Music: 8/10

Pros: No complaints...it all fits within the genre and game

Cons: I would've loved to see some voice work because the dialogue is already really funny and witty and could've really excelled and amplified the experience if the personalities could've come through more with different voices. It's understandable that an Indie studio doesn't contract such work though.

Lasting Appeal: 8/10

Pros: I have to admit that I don't like Mr. Robot as much as Moonpod's first title, Starscape, but Mr. Robot is a very refined and delightful title. The story is stronger than Starscape's and the writing is really topnotch.

Cons: It's an RPG and I'm not sure if you'll want to play the story over an over again since the battles, I found to be somewhat tedious and too "old school." It lacks the inventive real time engines of the newer RPGs like Final Fantasy X, Grandia, etc.

Average: 82.50%

Tilt: +0.50%

Indie RPGs are very difficult to execute and even harder to execute well. The scope of Mr. Robot is perfect: it takes place on a massive ship- with a finite area and sectors to cover. The thing that really keeps you playing Mr. Robot is the writing and personalities of all the robots. They really are all quite charming. This game is simply charming, and while it's \$5 more than most Indie Titles, the production values, graphics, presentation, etc. all make it an understandable increase in price and quality.

MR. Robot
Review by Mike

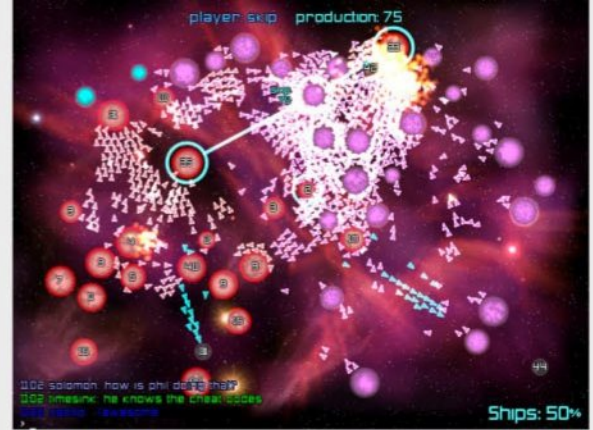
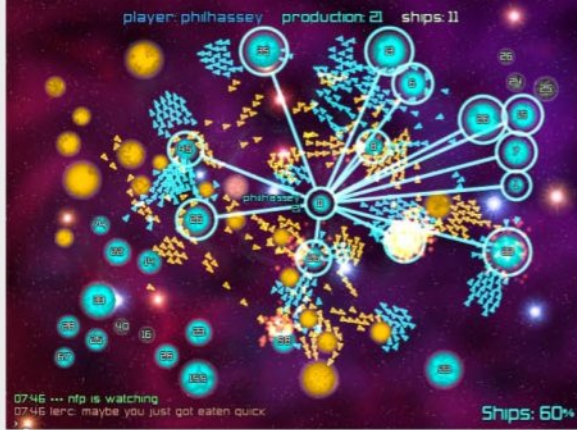
Gameplay: 8

Graphics: 9

Sound: 8

Appeal: 8

Final: 83%



Windows, Mac, Linux

GALCON

Developer: Imitation Pickles - **Players:** 1-12 **Website:** www.imitationpickles.org

Galcon is instantly fun and playable. I mean you can learn to play the game in 30 seconds (see here) and each match only lasts a couple minutes. The controls are easy and there's something about seeing hundreds of Asteroids-style triangle ships flying around that is very appealing to me. This game can be summed up in 2 words: Simple Enjoyment. The game is not deep and there are really no extravagant strategies or new features to unlock, but the game is fun and frantic.

Gameplay: 8.5/10

Pros: Very easy to learn and a very fast-paced strategy style game. The Tutorial quickly teaches you the basics, and the missions 1 player mode basically is a practice on varying strategies for online multiplayer. Galcon is instantly playable with few nuances. I love that victory is determined both by your reflexes and strategy.
Cons: There is a lack of depth overall in the gameplay. You basically just decide how many ships to send where. Having different ships would have been brilliant.

Graphics: 7.5/10

Pros: There's something very appealing about seeing a screen full of ships crisscrossing around the galaxy. It looks even better in Multiplayer where it happens frequently

and in a plethora of different colors. The presentation is excellent and the planets, maps, etc. are easy to see and distinguish.

Cons: There is very little animation or diversity in the graphics minus the change of color in the ships. The graphics fit the theme of the game well, and that's primarily why I haven't scored the graphics lower.

Sound/Music: 5/10

Pros: There is music and sound and it doesn't intrude on the gameplay.

Cons: The music is repetitive and the sound is minimal. All in all the sound aesthetic is a bare bones approach.

Lasting Appeal: 7/10

Pros: The multiplayer mode and the great gameplay shines in this title. The game is instantly playable and the gameplay is very engrossing.

Cons: The lack of features detracts from all of this because you are left wanting a lot more....more single player content, more ships, more graphic and sound variety, etc.

Average: 70.00%

Tilt: -1.00%

I really enjoyed this game, but I do think that it is overpriced so I have to tilt the score down slightly. It's really a +2.00%

for immediate appeal and playability and -3.00% for lack of features and a \$20 price tag. This game would be an absolute must buy at \$10, but \$20 feels a bit much since there's a lack of sounds/music/animations/power-ups/campaign mode, etc. This game's longevity lies in its online multiplayer, and restricting yourself to short play sessions. The game really shines when you get a multiplayer match with 3+ people, but sometimes it can be hard to find such games or that many players. Just download the demo, so at the very least I will be able to find more people online to conquer. The original game was made in a 48 hour competition and won a bunch of awards...even though this title has been reworked etc. there is still some residual simplicity from the original 48 hour competition the game sprung from. Galcon is a good game nonetheless

Galcon
Review by Mike

Gameplay: 8.5

Graphics: 7.5

Sound: 5

Appeal: 7

Final: 69%



Windows, Mac, Linuz

PROFESSOR FIZZWIZZLE

Developer: Grubby Games - **Players:** 1 - **Website:** www.grubbygames.com

Let me start off by saying that Grubby Games has some of the absolute best kid's games on the market. That's not to say the appeal of Professor Fizzwizzle is only for kids, just that it has an excellent pace, graphics, sounds for kids, not to mention the problem-solving puzzles that make up the levels of the game. I must admit to using the "Solve Puzzle" feature on quite a few occasions myself. This feature is brilliant because at the moment a level gets frustrating and you feel it is impossible, you can simply pause and click for the solution. This definitely decreases the frustration factor and keeps you playing into the later levels. Prof. Fizzwizzle also keeps things interesting by adding new puzzle elements at a good pace from level to level. This keeps things from getting repetitive. In fact, my only major complaint with Prof. Fizzwizzle is that the gameplay is not for gamers. To the game's defense, it was not designed to appeal to the hardcore 2D gamers of yesteryear, the graphics whores of today's consoles, or the FPS/RTS pc crowd. This is a casual game, and if you take it as such, it is hard to find fault.

Gameplay: 8/10

Pros: Puzzles can be very challenging and continually add new elements or twists on old

elements to keep things fresh. A plethora of modes and types of puzzles.

Cons: Actual Gameplay is simplistic. You use the arrow keys to move the professor around and that's really it, besides the occasional power-up. Perfect for casual gamers, but not for me.

Graphics: 8/10

Pros: Graphics are clean, simple, and perfectly themed for the game. Animations are REALLY good.

Cons: Lack of WOW factor. More game objects animated as well as the Professor!

Sound/Music: 9.5/10

Pros: Music is perfect, catchy and subdued. The last thing you want is some crazy rock music while you are trying to solve a puzzle. Sound is unintrusive as well.

Cons: Sound/Music are not show stealers, but they are not meant to be, especially in a game like this.

Lasting Appeal: 10/10

Pros: Tons of different levels, modes, and sets of puzzles. If you get tired with the included puzzles there is a level editor and a ton of downloadable levels on Grubby Games' website.

Cons: What more could you ask for?

Average: 88.75

Tilt: +0.25

Grubby Games knows the casual market. Professor Fizzwizzle has won tons of critical acclaim, awards, etc. and I'm sure has sold tons of copies as well. It understands exactly the type of people that enjoy and buy these types of games and offers a huge repertoire of levels and features for them. Console gamers, PC gamers, and old school gamers alike could enjoy this game...will they shell out the cash to buy it...I doubt it...but the casual gamer will and will love that they did. Rarely have I seen a casual game that is 1: an Original Idea 2: not some sort of match 3 or bejeweled clone 4: more than a simple click here/there game...ahem...cake mania and diner dash and 5: actually worth \$20. What does Professor Fizzwizzle really do best? It offers you a tremendous value at \$20, because of the number of levels, downloadable levels, and ability to make your own levels. If you enjoy this game, you will not stop playing it due to a lack of features...that's for sure.

Prof. Fizzwizzle
Review by Mike

Gameplay: 8
Graphics: 8
Sound: 9.5
Appeal: 10

Final: 89%



Xbox Live Arcade



CASTLE CRASHERS

Developer: The Behemoth - **Players:** 4 - **Website:** www.thebehemoth.com

Castle Crashers finally arrived in late August and has been surrounded by controversy. First, there was the alleged rumored price of \$22.50 that caused the internet to erupt in outrage...no worries though, the game is only \$15. Then there were the 2 heinous bugs that caused the Behemoth's devlog and Castle Crashers site to crash. I have actually suffered both bugs.... 1 bug being that I cannot play online at all and the other being that my Level 28 knight, unlockables, and save file were erased on me right when I got to the Marsh level. Despite these bugs, I'm still a huge fan of Castle Crashers and have happily surpassed the point of first game erasure.

Castle Crashers exudes tremendous personality. Dan Paladin's hand drawn graphics are superb and there is a ton of humor and extra animation work that create mostly great moments (thief washing scrubbing clothes in the river, Ice/Barbarian Boss taking the time to laugh at you, Barbarian punching knocked down gray knight) and some not so funny ones (Thieves Forest animal crapping is just too much...Owl ok...deer & bear excessive). The sheer amount of work, animations, characters, levels, etc that went into this game is incredibly commendable.

Let's get to the particulars. I've already talked about the great graphics and animations, the story is thin... 4 knights have their 4 chicks stolen, but all the animated sequences (there's no dialogue) put together an interesting, if shallow story. The music is very catchy especially the shop theme and suits the eccentricity and theme of the title very well. The gameplay recreates the arcade co-op beat-em-up gameplay perfectly. It's instantly playable, and the leveling system gives the game depth. Leveling up unlocks deeper combos and magic abilities. There's also an immense amount of content to unlock from weapons, animal orbs, secret characters, etc.

It is a very big letdown that Online has been completely unplayable (I got about 30 secs of all you can quaff online once) but the Behemoth has assured its fans that a title update and downloadable content is on the way. I have played the game splitscreen and it is way more fun with a friend, even if a little less challenging. The major negatives for me have been the bugs (erasing my save was especially infuriating) and the annoying enemies that stand off the stage and shoot projectiles at you. All in all though this game is superb, utterly unique, and a must buy on XBLA. Hopefully,

the online issues will be fixed and we'll all be questing online in the coming weeks.

Orange Knight Rules!

Gameplay: 9/10
Graphics: 10/10
Sound/Music: 9/10
Lasting Appeal 9.5/10

Average: 93.75%
Tilt: -0.75% (sorry gotta take some off for the bugs)

Castle Crashers
Review by Mike

Gameplay: 8
Graphics: 10
Sound: 9
Appeal: 9

Final: 90%





Xbox Live Arcade

BRAID

Developer: Jonathan Blow - **Players:** 1 - **Website:** www.braid-game.com

Braid is a very commendable and entralling independent game by Jonathan Blow. First let me start off by saying that screenshots do not do this game justice. While the game is not pushing the graphical power of the Xbox, David Hellman's art for the game is simply fantastic. The game has a unique water color look to it and the swirling colors and especially the parralax backgrounds can astonish and fit perfectly into this surreal sort of fairy tale. The story of braid is interesting and has a pretty good twist of an ending. It's certainly one of the best XBLA stories out there. Since it's all presented in text form, it does lose something that other full priced games have. Let's get to it though, the best thing about Braid is the gameplay. It is a puzzle platform game revolving around time manipulation. This time manipulation reduces frustration (since if you die, you just rewind) and changes in each world keeping things very fresh.

Braid is doing everything right so far, but it does stumble. Braid is incredibly short and has little in the way of replay value (a speed achievement). While the shortness is refreshing (I really like that I've beaten the game, enjoyed it, experienced it and can now

move on), 1 more world of puzzles with 1 more mechanic would have gone a long way to flesh out the package. The game is about \$5 more expensive than a lot of the other XBLA games out there, but let's be honest, this game deserves to have you \$15 and was made by an indie studio rather than Capcom or some other uber developer. Still, I can see people's complaints about price (as spoiled as they are) especially with the brevity of the game. My only other complaint about the game is the lack of different enemies/hazards (c'mon 2 enemies?) and a lack of graphical diversity (the opening stage looks to cool! why are all the levels sprawling green hills?).

Bottom line is that this game is not for everybody, but is a very delightful and engaging little title. It is a very unique game that is definitely worth your time and money. I downloaded the trial game and unlocked the full version before I was even finished with the trial. Give it a try, support an indie game developer, and discover the clever story twist.

Gameplay: 9/10
 Graphics: 9/10
 Music: 9/10
 Lasting Appeal: 6/10

Average: 82.5%

Tilt: + 4.50%

Verdict: 87%



Braid
Review by Mike

Gameplay: 9
 Graphics: 9
 Sound: 9
 Appeal: 6

Final: 87%